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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAKU 001793

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SUBJECT: DASD MACDOUGALL'S MEETING WITH DEPUTY FOREIGN  
MINISTER AZIMOV

REF: BAKU 01753

Classified By: Ambassador Anne Derse for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Department of Defense Deputy Assistant  
Secretary James MacDougall and the Ambassador met with Deputy

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Foreign Minister Araz Azimov on December 7 to discuss the  
National Security Concept, Azerbaijan's relations with NATO,  
and USG plans for an interagency team to discuss Iran.  
Azimov's views on the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) negotiations are  
reported septel. Azimov welcomed bilateral military  
cooperation with the US because it focuses on developing the  
military's "national capacity." Azimov indicated that the  
GOAJ recognizes it is not likely to be accepted into NATO any  
time soon, while it understands the importance of keeping the  
idea of NATO membership alive. On regional security  
dynamics, Azimov referred to Russian attempts "to strangle  
us," while stating that Tbilisi's unreliable behavior is  
often "not in our interest." MacDougall informed Azimov of  
plans for a senior-level USG team to discuss Iran-related  
issues with the GOAJ, possibly in January. End Summary

Military Cooperation, NSC, and NATO Update  
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¶2. (C) Department of Defense Deputy Assistant Secretary  
James MacDougall and the Ambassador--accompanied by EUCOM  
Brigadier General Melvin Spiese--met with Deputy Foreign  
Minister Araz Azimov on December 7. MacDougall began the  
meeting by remarking that the relationship has been growing  
broader and deeper. In the bilateral military relationship,  
one of the next steps is to push more responsibility down to  
the level of generals and colonels, so that all issues are  
not kept at the ministry level.

¶3. (C) Azimov noted that he has been working as the head of  
an interagency group to draft the National Security Concept  
(NSC), reftel. The interagency group will continue as a key  
coordinating mechanism on national security issues, Azimov  
said. The NSC will lay the basis for the later Military  
Doctrine and ultimately will produce a Strategic Defense  
Review and Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy Strategy. The US is  
"expected and invited" to participate in advising during the  
preparation of these documents (septel). Azimov indicated  
the MFA may play a coordinating role on these documents. The  
NSC document will be reviewed regularly, and a synergy will  
need to be created between the Military Doctrine and the  
Foreign Policy Strategy. He noted that the documents could  
be useful in alleviating bureaucratic turf battles because

the documents will lay out a common vision. (Comment: Azimov's precise role in coordinating the Military Doctrine and the Foreign Policy Strategy is ambiguous. He clearly aspires to play a central coordinating role. He referred to retired UK General Sir Garry Johnson--who has been advising the GOAJ on the drafting of the NSC--as his "spy" in the MOD. Per reftel, UK Ambassador Bristow believes Azimov likely will be sidelined during the drafting of the Military Doctrine.)

¶4. (C) Azimov commented that the Azerbaijani military is comparatively somewhere between the Georgian and Ukrainian militaries. Compared to Georgia, Azerbaijan has not had a revolution. Azerbaijan also has more experience than the Georgian military. The Azerbaijani military is strongly influenced by Soviet education, but also has received the benefit of Turkish education--although a "lubricant" is needed for these two different educational backgrounds. It is unfortunate that there are not more US-educated troops in the Azerbaijani MOD. He suggested that more English-language training courses for MOD and MFA officers would be a positive step. The Azerbaijani military is more similar to the Ukrainian military because they both share a strong background in Soviet military education.

¶5. (C) Azimov commented that US military assistance is helpful. In particular, the goal of cooperation appears focused on developing the "national capacity" of the Azerbaijani military. Azerbaijan seeks to raise the quality of its personnel through joint military cooperation.

¶6. (C) Azimov commented on Azerbaijan's cooperation with NATO. Azimov characterized the IPAP as a "useful" instrument and an area where the GOAJ and the USG can cooperate bilaterally and within the NATO framework. Spiese agreed

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with this comment, while Azimov said that the GOAJ would begin elaborating initiatives for its new IPAP that will be developed in 2007. Azimov indicated new initiatives could include energy, border, and maritime security. He also noted that the GOAJ seeks to create a troop unit that could be used for international missions. Azimov said the key areas where Azerbaijan works with NATO are political unanimity, harmonization of its laws, and interoperability. Azimov said the GOAJ recognizes it is not likely to be accepted into NATO any time soon. He noted, however, that it is important to keep the idea of NATO membership alive. Azimov referred to the above-noted national documents and the IPAP as "building blocks" and said that specific programs are key. The GOAJ seeks to deal with NATO in a different manner than the "headaches" that Georgia has created. Azimov said there are two GOAJ institutions that work on NATO-related issues: a NATO council chaired by the Prime Minister and an interagency working group.

¶7. (C) MacDougall congratulated Azimov on his leadership role in drafting the NSC, which is "a big step forward." MacDougall said DoD would like to support--in an advisory capacity--the creation of the Military Doctrine. The Monterey Center for Civil Military Relations could help in this area. MacDougall noted that in the last six months, he has observed a deeper commitment within the MOD to move toward NATO transformation, which is likely a reflection on a broader GOAJ decision to cooperate closely with NATO. He has heard good things from NATO officials about Azerbaijan's work with the alliance. MacDougall observed that NATO officials likely appreciate that the GOAJ has moved "quietly, but firmly" toward NATO. MacDougall said he agreed with Azimov's position that it is best for Azerbaijan to integrate as much as possible with NATO, while leaving the question of NATO membership for the future. As Ukraine's orientation toward the West appears to be slowing, this unfortunately detracts from Georgia and Azerbaijan's potential membership.

Regional Dynamics

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¶8. (C) Azimov said that since the early years of independence, Azerbaijan has had problems with Russia. Russia "talks in a smooth way, but they still strangle us." Referring to Russia's continuing imperialistic views, Azimov said Moscow still has "old perceptions" of Azerbaijan and the entire South Caucasus. Turning to Georgia, Azimov said that there are differences in Tbilisi's and Baku's approach to Moscow and these differences "are not in our interest." The GOAJ wants to see more reliable and predictable behavior from Tbilisi. He observed that "continued instability" in Ukraine is helping Yanukovich, and he was unsure that Ukraine is "going to be on the winning side," which will leave Georgia alone. He predicted that Moscow will increase pressure on Georgia in the coming months. In contrast to Georgia, Azimov stated, "Azerbaijan is different" because we "represent another pattern of development." He noted that officials in Washington probably sleep better at night when they think about Azerbaijan compared to Georgia.

#### Iran Consultations

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¶9. (C) MacDougall told Azimov that the US is preparing to send a State-DoD team at the Assistant Secretary level to discuss Iran-related issues with the GOAJ, perhaps in January. The purpose of the discussion is to share views about what is going on inside Iran and to discuss how to deal with the security threat posed by Iran's nuclear programs. MacDougall asked Azimov to consider which Azerbaijani representatives would attend these discussions. Increasingly in Washington, there is an understanding that both the USG and the GOAJ can benefit from consultations on Iran.

#### Comment

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¶10. (C) Azimov is perhaps the MFA's key strategic thinker. Azimov is comfortable discussing broad, philosophical aspects of the bilateral relationship, but he can easily move into a detailed discussion of the modalities of a potential NK settlement. Assuming his thoughts on NATO reflect the view of other senior GOAJ officials, we can expect to see Baku maintain a flexible approach with the alliance, while

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assigning a high value to close cooperation. Azimov's negative comments about Georgia parallel what some other MFA officers have told us privately. While the GOAJ understands the importance of Georgia's maintaining its sovereignty in its relations with Russia, Azerbaijani officials on numerous occasions have expressed their frustration with Georgia's international behavior.

¶11. (U) DASD MacDougall cleared this message.  
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